United Nations A/C.2/66/SR.20

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
22 November 2011

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 20th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 24 October 2011, at 11.30 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Zdorov (Vice-Chair) ..... (Belarus)

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11-56061 (E)

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In the absence of Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Mr. Zdorov (Belarus), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Agenda item 25: Agriculture development and food security (A/66/76-E/2011/102 and A/66/277)

1. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Chief, Global Policy Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on agriculture development and food security (A/66/277), said that the food crisis, particularly in the eastern Horn of Africa, was the worst humanitarian emergency in the world at present; it had been caused by, among other things, one of the most severe droughts since 1950, which had resulted in crop failure and substantial livestock mortality and had led to dramatically high food prices. As of October 2011, 32 countries were in need of external food assistance; across Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, an estimated 13.3 million persons were in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, of whom 750,000 were at risk of starvation. The International Committee of the Red Cross estimated that 30 to 40 per cent of children under 5 years of age were suffering from acute malnutrition and that thousands of children had already died. Although the numbers of undernourished had declined to about 925 million in 2010, much remained to be done to reach Millennium Development Goal 1.

2. The drivers behind that crisis were identified in the report, namely, the unprecedentedly high food prices and their high level of volatility; erratic food production as a result of climate change; a decrease in investment, particularly by the public sector, in sustainable agriculture development; the ever-increasing global population; the fact that some 3 billion people were now eating greater quantities of grain-intensive livestock and poultry products; and, finally, the increased demand for food and feed crops for the production of biofuels.

3. In an attempt to tackle food and nutrition insecurity, Governments, regional bodies and the international community were increasingly following a twin-track comprehensive approach of addressing immediate needs, through nutrition interventions, emergency food assistance and safety nets, whilst implementing longer-term actions that sought to tackle the structural causes of insecurity, strengthen capacity for managing disaster risk and build more resilient livelihoods and food production systems. The report provided an overview of the international efforts being made to invest in a more coordinated multilateral response to the crisis.

4. Concerted and coordinated efforts by Governments and the international community would be needed to achieve long-term food security. Some priority actions were suggested in the report: successful practices should be scaled up and existing commitments honoured; Governments should invest more in social protection in order to increase the resilience of livelihoods and put a social safety net in place; small farmers should be integrated into value chains and connected to markets; and the development of small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises should be accorded priority in national development planning. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 would provide an important opportunity to focus on future efforts towards achieving food and nutrition security and developing sustainable agriculture.

5. **Mr. Suarez Salvia** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the global food crisis, exacerbated by the ongoing global financial and economic crisis, had become a major challenge to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Underdevelopment, desertification and land degradation, together with extreme weather events, had undermined livelihoods and food and nutrition security in the Horn of Africa and other regions of the world. The Group of 77 and China called for the international community to adopt an integrated approach in the form of immediate, medium and long-term actions to address those problems.

6. Unless rapid progress was made in reducing hunger, particularly in rural areas, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the other MDGs. Urgent measures needed to be taken at the national, regional and international levels. It was a fundamental human right to be free from hunger and to have access to safe and nutritious food. To realize that right, sustained funding and targeted investment was needed to enhance world food production, and new and additional financial resources had to found in order to achieve sustainable agriculture development and food security. Moreover, the agricultural sector in developing countries needed to be strengthened and revitalized, including through the empowerment of

women, indigenous peoples, rural communities, and small and medium-scale farmers; the provision of technical and financial assistance; access to and transfer of technology; capacity-building; and research in food and agriculture, including research into ways to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

7. It was not sufficient to increase food production; one of the root causes of food crises was access to and the distribution of food. National and international policies should focus on addressing that problem, especially for the poor and most vulnerable in developing countries. Agricultural subsidies and other trade distortions by developed countries had severely harmed the agricultural sector in developing countries, limiting their ability to tackle poverty, rural development and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth effectively. The Group therefore urged developed countries to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and political will to address those concerns during the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

8. The first seven MDGs required considerable efforts on the part of Governments and peoples of developing countries themselves. MDG 8 highlighted the responsibility of wealthier industrialized nations to assist those efforts. Agriculture and the rural economy were key sectors for supporting livelihoods in protracted crises; however, they were not properly reflected in aid flows. The existing aid architecture needed to address both immediate needs and the structural causes of protracted crises. The international financial and economic architecture must be reformed urgently in order to solve the structural economic problems faced by all sectors in developing countries, including agriculture.

9. Beyond the crisis, there was a need to enhance agricultural productivity and promote sustainable agricultural practices, in ways that respected the lives of the local people as well as biodiversity of the ecosystem, which would necessitate financial and technical support for research into environmentally sound technologies. It was important to protect and promote people's livelihoods over the longer term. Many developing countries had been forced to become net food importers. An increase in agricultural investment and international cooperation remained critical to sustainable long-term food security; there was a need to promote adequate investment in rural infrastructure, enhance market access for developing countries and promote responsible international investment in agriculture.

10. **Mr. Acharya** (Nepal), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that agriculture was the foundation of people's livelihoods and socio-economic development in the least developed countries (LDCs), as more than 70 per cent of their people still depended upon it. However, the LDCs faced multiple challenges in agricultural development and food security due to the unavailability of adequate financial resources, under-investment in physical infrastructure, and lack of technology, scientific research and agricultural extension services. Those challenges were compounded by the prevalence of subsistence farming methods in LDCs and their high degree of dependence on commodity exports and food and fuel imports, along with a lack of industrialization and a weak economic base.

11. The current global economic and financial crisis, the energy crisis, the volatility of food prices and the adverse impacts of climate change had gravely affected the efforts of LDCs to meet the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and eradicate poverty and hunger. There was a critical need to focus on adaptation, mitigation and sustainable management of natural resources, and to conserve biodiversity. The Group hoped that the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development would focus on sustainable agricultural development and food security, especially in the LDCs.

12. The LDCs were disproportionately affected by volatility in food prices and hunger; desertification and drought, salinization and land degradation were a daily reality, and a majority of people in the LDCs did not currently have enough food to meet their basic daily nutritional needs, despite the fact that the global food supply could meet the demands of all. It was imperative for LDCs to improve agricultural productivity and food security as that would lead to sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and peace and security in society. That would require greater international support for LDCs along with support for building institutional capacities at the national and global levels, including within specialized agencies and international financial institutions.

13. The Group noted with dismay that the share of official development assistance in agriculture had

declined sharply over the past 20 years. It was therefore urgent for the international community, especially the development partners, to reverse that trend. The Group called for the early fulfilment of commitments made by the Group of Eight in the Joint Statement on Global Food Security: L'Aquila Food Security Initiative and for the work of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme to be scaled up and made more comprehensive. The LDCs required greater levels of short-, medium- and long-term investment in sustainable agricultural and rural development in order to generate more employment opportunities for rural poor people and to improve long-term agricultural productivity and food security. The transfer and use of appropriate, affordable, sustainable and climate resilient agricultural technology, combined with local knowledge, and supportive international trade rules were also vital.

14. Members of the World Trade Organization needed to fulfil their 2005 pledge to ensure the elimination of all forms of agricultural subsidies by the end of 2013, as agreed in the Istanbul Programme of Action. Policy measures should be in place to reduce price volatility, including improved information systems for stocks and production, greater transparency in commodity markets, and free movement of food supplies. The goals and objectives of the Programme of Action were attainable and should be attained. To that end, the LDCs needed increased financial and technical support from all development partners; an enhanced level of South-South cooperation could play an important complementary role.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.